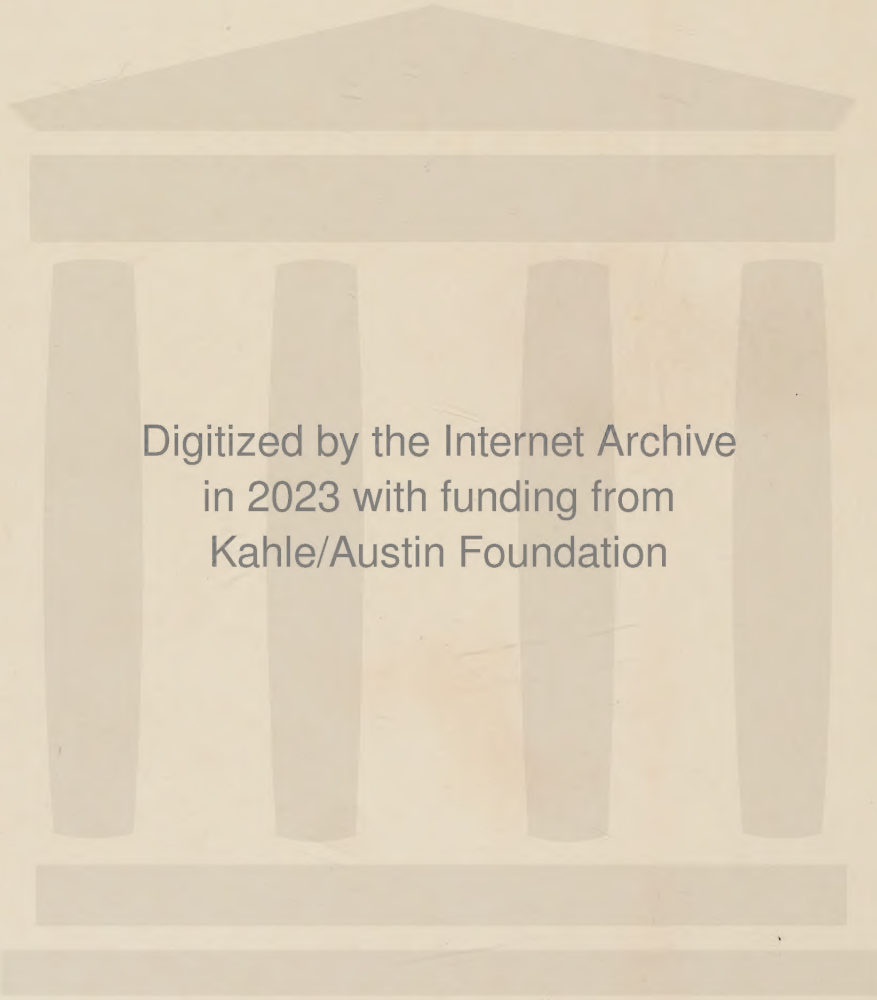


ROUSING STORIES FOR BOYS





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Willie Smith

The most popular
boy in Shelburne School
1928-29



His fists moved mechanically, still dealing the sledge-hammer blows. (See page 92.)

ROUSING STORIES

FOR BOYS



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DOUBLE DUMMY.

By HAROLD AVERY.

I.

"You *have* got a nerve!" chuckled Bream.

It would perhaps have been more correct to say that Rawdon had no nerves—a fact which, in the light of what happened later, it is important to bear in mind. When the Head, paying a surprise visit to the Upper Fourth, had put him on to construe, he certainly had felt his heart sink within him; but never in his life had he been known to give way to an attack of what is sometimes called "the jumps."



"You *have* got a nerve!" chuckled Bream.

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"You have got a nerve," repeated Bream.

The remark had reference to the cool manner in which Rawdon had just engineered the escape of himself and his chum from the Big School, where was now in progress the second half of the concert which, at Shalebury, marked the close of the winter term.

The night was dark. The pair were hurrying across what was known as the court, and behind them the lights from the building they had just left were blurred by the mist which had followed a heavy downpour of rain.

"It was lucky we got those seats at the end of a row," said Rawdon, "and that old Dyson was at the door. If it had been one of the other pres.—Inch, for instance—I doubt if we should have done it."

"Rotten weather!" grumbled Bream. "It's to be hoped it won't last over Christmas."

The two boys both belonged to the same house, in the direction of which they were now heading. Rawdon's intention was to entertain his chum to a sort of private breaking-up supper in the basement chamber, where the play-boxes of Lower School boys were stored. There had been something alluring in the thought of enjoying a veal-and-ham pie in peace and quietness while the other members of Barr's were still absent at the concert.

To judge from the appearance of the house when they reached it, the holidays might have already commenced. There were no sounds of life and movement ;

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most of the windows were in darkness. Passing in through the boys' door in the basement, the pair entered a cloakroom, dimly lit by a lowered gas jet.

"Wait a jiff!" muttered Rawdon, slackening his pace and coming to a halt. "I've a jolly good mind to——"

He broke off with a chuckle, and stood thinking.

"What's up?" inquired Bream.

"It was speaking about Inch put it into my head," was the reply. "He's away there at the concert, and I'd like just to pull his leg."

"How d'you suppose you could do that?"

"Go to his study and rig up a dummy figure with his oilskin and sou'-wester, and label it 'Jack Salt.' He'd be as mad as a hatter when he saw it."

Bream understood, and a slight shrug of his shoulders showed that he did not think the project "worth while."

At the end of the summer holidays Inch had returned to Shalebury direct from the south coast, where he had been enjoying a fortnight's cruising about in a small yacht belonging to a friend. He had brought with him an oilskin and sou'-wester. Even great men have their little weaknesses, and it had been Inch's foible, at the commencement of the term, to pose rather as the ancient mariner. His friends had laughed him out of it, and the matter was now practically forgotten. But Rawdon knew that for a time, among his intimates, Inch had gone by the name of "Jack Salt." The dummy figure would be a feeble attempt to revive a worn-out joke.

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"Oh, I shouldn't do that," protested Bream. "What's the good? it's such piffle."

"It would send him into a rare old paddy."

"Get away; there's no sense in it. If we mean to have that feed, we'd better get on with it; we haven't too much time."

"It won't take five minutes," declared Rawdon. "I must do something. Inch has had a down on me all the term, and this is the last chance to get back at him, because he's leaving. Come on; I want you to keep 'cave.'"

Bream refused, then hesitated, and finally gave way. So long as Rawdon was quick about it there could be no harm done. If he chose to play the fool, that was his affair.

"Well, look sharp; and if you get into a bother with Inch, mind you don't drag me into it."

"My good chap," returned Rawdon in a slightly injured tone, "you ought to know I shouldn't do that. Of course I won't."

The pair ascended the stairs leading from the basement to the ground floor, and came to a halt. To their left was the commencement of the study corridor, which, like the cloakroom, was but feebly illuminated by a gas jet which had been left turned low. At Barr's only the seniors possessed these sanctums, the lower boys herding in a Day Room. Not a sound broke the silence; with every one at the concert the coast was clear.



"You'd better wait here," continued Rawdon in a low tone.

"'The Deserted Village,'" murmured Rawdon.
"It's safe enough."

So it seemed ; but the passage he was about to enter did certainly form a blind alley from which escape would

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be difficult if anything did go wrong ; therefore it was well not to risk being taken by surprise.

“You’d better wait here,” continued Rawdon in a low tone. “If it’s necessary, you can just give me a whistle. You’ll hear if the front door opens, or if any one comes into the cloakroom down below.”

“Right you are,” growled Bream. “Hurry up, and keep your ears cocked. If I have to whistle, it’ll have to be done softly. It won’t do to make a row that can be heard twenty miles off, or we shall both be in the soup.”

With a nod Rawdon turned on his heel and stepped off softly along the corridor. Like all the other studies, No. 8 was in darkness ; and, as the boy pushed open the door, he drew from his pocket a candle and a box of matches. He had not intended to light the gas down in the basement, lest the bright glare from an incandescent burner might attract the attention of any one returning prematurely from the concert. For the same reason he thought it wise not to use the study gas—a precaution rendered all the more necessary by the fact that there was no covering to the window. Since he was leaving, the owner of the den had already taken down his curtains, which were his own private property.

“Now we shan’t be long,” muttered Rawdon.

He lit his candle, and propped it up between two books on the top of a low cupboard. The garments he was in search of were found hanging on a peg behind the door. The next thing to decide was what he should

use for a support—a question which, for the moment, seemed difficult to answer.

It was while he stood thinking that there came across him an unpleasant feeling of having ventured on thin ice, which was about to break and let him through. It was one of those odd warnings which are given by instinct rather than by one of the five senses, and which are difficult to explain. He felt that he was being watched, and glanced towards the window, the outside ledge of which was but a few feet from the ground. The brass catch was fastened, and the only thing to be seen was a reflection of the candle flame in the lower pane.

“Pish!” he muttered; “who’ll ever know it was my doing?”

He did, however, step back into the passage for a moment to make sure that he had not missed a signal from Bream. The subdued light from the gas jet showed that the corridor was empty, and not a sound was to be heard.

“What a fool I am!” thought the listener, as he recovered his usual coolness and self-control. “Now, how can I rig up that figure?”

Whatever he did must be done quickly, for Bream would become impatient if there was any delay. The only thing was to make use of whatever lay ready to hand. In the end Rawdon succeeded better than might have been expected. A chair was hastily placed on the top of a small wooden box which stood just in front of



Lastly, the oilskin was draped over the chair.

the window, and in which Inch intended to pack some of his books. A cricket bag, found lying on the floor, was propped up in the seat of the chair and crowned with the sou'-wester. Lastly, the oilskin was draped over the chair.

“Now for the label!”

As luck would have it, several scraps of paper were lying littered about on the table, and on one of these, in big capital letters, and with the aid of Inch's

own pen and ink, the intruder printed the words "JACK SALT." He had no pin, but managed, by tearing a hole in the paper, to fix his placard to the top button of the oilskin. When this had been done his task was finished.

"There! that'll make him tear his hair," chuckled Rawdon.

He picked up his box of matches and blew out the candle, which he dropped into his pocket; then, leaving the study door open, he stole out into the corridor. Glancing back into the room he had just left, he could see the head and shoulders of the dummy silhouetted against the gray oblong of the window. It certainly looked rather weird.

"Old Inch'll wonder who on earth has come to pay him a visit. Golly! I'd like Bream just to have a squint at it."

Bream certainly ought to see the figure. He would then be able to share the sport of imagining what would be Inch's feelings when he returned from the concert. Rawdon tiptoed nearly to the end of the passage.

"Bream!" he called in a low tone. "Come here a minute."

There was no reply. It seemed almost as if the sentry must have deserted his post. Rawdon stood fidgeting and impatient; then, with a careless movement of his thumb, he pushed open the matchbox, which he

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was still carrying in his hand, with the result that its contents fell scattered about on the floor.

“Bother! It wasn’t my fault; it’s this stupid box.”

He stooped down, and was occupied for over a minute gathering up his matches and replacing them in the box. As he rose to his feet the idea struck him that it would be better to leave the study door closed instead of open.

“Some other fellow might see ‘Jack Salt’ and meddle with him before Inch comes,” thought Rawdon.

He stepped back quickly along the passage, and, pausing outside the door of No. 8, looked into the room. The next instant his heart seemed to stop beating. As his eyes fell on the shadowy outline of the dummy figure he distinctly saw it begin to move. Without a sound it glided away into the darkness, leaving the gray shape of the window, in front of which it had been placed, now wholly visible.

Rawdon was no coward; but it must be remembered that he was alone in a dimly lit and deserted corridor. He caught his breath, with a horrible feeling of icy water trickling down his back. The chair and cricket bag could not have fallen, or he would have heard the crash. In some mysterious manner the dummy figure had become possessed of the power to move, and might now be edging round the room towards the door. From a distance came the sound of a low whistle. That seemed

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the climax. Rawdon took to his heels and scooted down the corridor like the wind.

"I believe I heard some one crossing the hall," whispered Bream.

The pair moved a few steps down the basement staircase, from which position they could have seen any one entering or leaving the study corridor. Rawdon's heart seemed to be thumping against his ribs as they paused to listen. He hardly liked to tell his chum what had happened ; it would sound so absurd.

"I can't hear anything now. Perhaps it was only Martin," muttered Bream, naming the house porter.

"I say, didn't you hear me call to you just now?" asked Rawdon.

"No ; I never heard anything," was the reply. "What did you want?"

"I thought I'd like you to have come and have a look at the dummy."

There was something queer in the speaker's voice which did not escape his friend's notice.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Oh, only something gave me a bit of a start," answered Rawdon. "Even now I can't quite understand what happened."

In a few words he described what he had seen.

"Rot!" scoffed Bream. "The whole thing tumbled down, and that's what made you think you saw it move."

"It can't have fallen ; I should have heard the crash."

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For a few moments they stood arguing, Bream confident that his explanation of the mystery was correct.



They lit their candle as they reached the door of No. 8.

"Well, look here," said Rawdon, who had by this time got over the worst of the shock. "Let's both go and see. If the blessed thing is as I left it, then my eyes want testing—something must have gone wrong with my sight."

Bream was anxious to prove that he was right. They started off, lit their candle as they reached the door of No. 8, then entered the study.

"Hullo!" gasped Rawdon. "W—why, where's it gone?"

"Jack Salt" had disappeared. The packing case was there, right enough, beneath the window. The chair stood beside the table, and the cricket bag lay on the floor, seemingly just as they had done before being used to build up the dummy figure; but of oilskin and sou'-wester not a vestige was to be seen.

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For several seconds Rawdon stood staring about him in speechless astonishment; then the silence was broken by his chum.

“What’s the joke?” inquired Bream snappishly.
“What d’you think you’re playing at?”

II.

"I TELL you I put the chair and the cricket bag on this box," began Rawdon breathlessly.

"Get away!" retorted Bream. "You're trying to pull my leg."

"I'm not," protested Rawdon. "I'll swear what I'm telling you is the truth. What's become of that coat and cap?"

"Some one may have been in here and bagged them," suggested Bream. "The same fellow put the chair and the bag back where you say you found 'em."

"How could any one have come into this passage without one of us seeing him?"

"He may have been hiding in one of the studies before we came," muttered Bream. "In that case he's there now. We'd better see who it is."

Candle in hand, Rawdon walked the whole length of the corridor, pausing to glance into each of the studies; but they were all unoccupied. Not a soul was to be seen. Bream began to show signs of ruffled temper as he returned to what had been his first view of the affair.

"I've had enough of this," he said. "It's my leg you've been trying to pull instead of Inch's. You ask a fellow to have some grub, and then you start this rotten game. I suppose you think it's funny."



Candle in hand, Rawdon walked the whole length of the corridor, pausing to glance into each of the studies.

“But, my good chap——”

“Oh, do dry up. If you really mean us to have that feed, we’d better get on with it before the whole crowd come back from the concert.”

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Rawdon blew out his candle. Much as he would have liked to hunt round in the hope of discovering some clue to the mystery, he was forced to remember that he had invited Bream to supper, and so could not neglect his duty as host.

"Come on, then," he said. "You needn't get ratty; there's plenty of time."

Down in the basement the feast was soon spread, play-boxes lifted from the rack providing seats and a table. The lighted candle placed between them cast grotesque shadows of the two boys on walls and ceiling.

"Jolly sight better than having to sit out the whole of that rotten concert, eh?" remarked Rawdon, with a laugh which sounded a bit hollow.

The meat pie and the hot cocoa were all that could be desired, yet the pair munched away for a time in silence. It seemed as if some wet blanket had been cast over the whole proceeding. Bream was still vexed at having been made the victim of a senseless hoax. He now felt convinced that Rawdon had failed to find the oilskin and sou'-wester in Inch's study, and, being still determined to have a joke at somebody's expense, had come along with this silly yarn about having seen the dummy figure move. It was too stupid to be funny, and even now the fellow refused to admit that he had been fooling.

"I say, old chap," began Rawdon suddenly, "I

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know you still think what I told you about 'Jack Salt' was all bunkum, but——"

"Oh, do give that wheeze of yours a rest," interrupted Bream snappishly. "If you think I'm going to swallow all you choose to tell me, you're mistaken."

"Well, tell me this. D'you think it's possible for a person to imagine he's done a thing when really he hasn't?"

"Yes," answered Bream promptly. "I've seen you do that often."

"You have?" gasped the other with a look of dismay.

"Yes: I've seen you think you'd worked out the right answer to the equation when really you hadn't. When Sumner has seen what you've put, he's gone up into the air, and it's been minutes before he came down again. Haw-haw!"

The speaker chuckled, feeling that he had scored a point at last.

"No; that's rot," protested Rawdon. "What I mean is, d'you think it's possible I could have thought I made that dummy when it was really all imagination? That's the only way I can account for what happened. A sort of dream, if you understand what I mean."

"What seems to me more likely is that you're going dotty," snarled Bream.

He rose to his feet and walked off in a huff, leaving his chum to clear away the remains of the feast. He



He rose to his feet and walked off in a huff.

was determined to show Rawdon that the joke had become wearisome, and inwardly vowed not to speak to the fellow again until he showed more sense.

"I can't think what's come to the chap," mused Bream. "He was sane and cute enough when we dodged out of the concert ; then he starts acting the fool. Seems almost as if he had a kink in his brain."

Discipline was somewhat relaxed at Barr's on the last evening of a term, and it was later than usual when the junior members prepared to pass on to bed. They were about to do so when Bream remembered that a prefect named Maddox had promised to give him some information with regard to trains. He decided

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he had better get it now, as there would be a rush in the morning.

Maddox was found standing in the study corridor talking to Inch. Their conversation did not appear to be private; they took no notice of Bream, who halted

near enough to the pair to hear what was said.

"You mean that oil-skin and sou'-wester of yours, don't you?" asked Maddox.

"That's it," was the reply. "I always kept them hanging up behind my door. Now they're gone, and I can't find them anywhere."

"You want to pack them, I suppose?"

"Not only that, but if I don't find them I'm landed in a regular hole. Don't know quite what I'd better do."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I've lost something else," began Inch. "As



"I've lost something else," began Inch.

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you know, stamp-collecting has always been my indoor hobby. I had some approval sheets sent me by a dealer, which contained a number of rather rare specimens. I suppose at catalogue prices the lot were worth something like £20. I meant to return them this evening. I slipped off down town after tea, and as it was raining cats and dogs, I put on that oilskin coat. I was too late to get the letter registered, so I brought it back, meaning to send it off to-morrow. Like a fool I left the letter in one of the pockets of the coat ; now it's vanished, and the sou'-wester into the bargain."

"But they must be somewhere. Have you had a good hunt round your study?"

"I've looked high and low, and can't find them."

"Some one must have had the cool cheek to borrow them without so much as asking leave," said Maddox. "Oh, you'll get them back all right.—Hallo, Bream ; what d'you want?"

Bream put his question, and, having made a pencilled note of the reply, walked off down the corridor. His mind was full of what he had just heard. Not for a moment did he believe that his chum had stolen the precious letter, but it suddenly struck him that if Rawdon persisted in his foolery he would lay himself open to a very serious charge.

"It would serve the beggar right for being such an ass," he muttered.

But Bream was too loyal a friend to allow his chum

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to run his head blindly into a noose when a word of warning would prevent the disaster. He rushed upstairs, and had the good luck to overtake Rawdon just as the latter was about to enter his dormitory.

"I want to speak to you," began Bream in a hurried whisper. "Don't go telling any one else that stupid yarn of yours about the dummy, or you may find yourself in a beastly mess."

In a few words he repeated what he had overheard in the study corridor.

"Don't you see what I'm driving at?" he continued. "If Inch hears you've been saying that you meddled with his oilskins, he'll hold you responsible for the loss of those stamps—that is, if the chap who's borrowed the togs doesn't bring them back."

"But they were in his study," gasped Rawdon: "they were hanging up behind the door."

"They can't have been: they weren't in the room when we went to look."

"They were there right enough when I——"

"Oh, if you mean to stick to it, I've nothing more to say," interrupted Bream angrily. "You'd better go and tell Inch the first thing in the morning; that would be better than for him to hear it second-hand. As I told you down in the box-room, it seems to me you're going dotty."

Without giving the other a chance to reply, Bream turned on his heel and strode off to his own sleeping quarters further down the passage.



He was overwhelmed with a feeling of blank dismay.

Rawdon entered his dormitory, and, hardly conscious of what he was doing, sat down on his bed. He paid no attention to the hum of lively conversation going on around him. He was overwhelmed with a feeling of blank dismay.

“Great Scot! I wish I’d sat out the whole of the concert instead of playing the giddy fool,” he pondered. “Inch knows I collect stamps myself, and he may think I bagged that letter.”

The dummy figure project had from the first been idiotic, and it might be difficult to get any one to believe he had ever intended to do such a silly thing. The way the affair had ended would sound still more incredible. Even Bream regarded the story as rubbish.

“I can’t have imagined it all,” thought Rawdon. “It must have really happened; yet how on earth was it done?”

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Rapidly the recollection of one incident after another flashed through his mind—how he had made the dummy ; how he had distinctly seen its dark shape move away from the window ; then the amazing discovery that the chair and the cricket bag were back in the places where he had first found them, and that “ Jack Salt’s ” coat and cap had disappeared. Had there been another joker on the warpath, as Bream had at first suggested, how could he have escaped from the study corridor without being seen ?

“ I say, are you going to sit there all night ? ” inquired a voice. “ Aren’t you ever going to undress ? ”

Rawdon roused himself with a start, and began to pull off his coat.

“ I was just thinking about something, ” he muttered.

III.

IN time Maddox, who was in charge of the room and enjoyed a prefect's privilege of staying up later than the common herd, retired to rest, and with the blowing out of his candle all light in the room was finally extinguished. But Rawdon could not sleep. He lay awake in the darkness, his brain in a whirl.

"Some one might have known about that letter, and made up his mind to steal it while Inch was at the concert," he pondered. "But the beggar would never have made off with the oilskin and sou'-wester as well. There'd have been no sense in his doing that."

Still, there was a chance that the things had been stolen; and if so, common honesty demanded that he, Rawdon, should come forward and tell Inch what he knew with regard to the curious manner in which the garments had disappeared.

"He won't believe me," thought Rawdon. "He'll declare the yarn's all bunkum, and that I must have taken the beastly things. Besides, it would mean dragging Bream into the mess."

This last thought was positively appalling; but if he made a confession, it would never do to keep back anything which might afterwards come to light. If he were caught tripping, then the whole of his statement would

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be regarded as a falsehood. No, he must tell the whole story from start to finish ; yet he had given his word that if there was a row about the dummy, Bream's share in the business should not be mentioned.

"He'd never forgive me if I dragged him into it," Rawdon groaned inwardly. "What the fellows will say is, that I arranged with him to keep watch while I prigged the stamps."

Presently there came a gleam of hope. Possibly some wag among the seniors had made off with "Jack Salt's" garments. If so, and the joker had returned them after the junior members of the house had gone to bed, they might now be hanging in their usual place behind Inch's door.

"I wish I knew," Rawdon kept repeating to himself; "I wish I knew. I shan't sleep a wink while I've got this bother on my mind."

All at once he was seized with a wild resolve. Every person in the house was sound asleep ; it would be an easy matter for him to slip down to the study corridor and see if the oilskins were back on their accustomed peg. His box of matches and what remained of his candle were still in his coat pocket.

"That's what I'll do," he decided. "It ought not to take more than five minutes."

He raised himself on his elbow, then hesitated. If any one found him wandering about the house in the dead of night, nothing could keep the fat out of the fire,



He raised himself on his elbow, then hesitated.

for he would be forced to confess what was the object of his errand. It was an unpleasant thought, and on top of it came a fleeting though vivid recollection of the dummy's figure gliding away into the darkness. Whether caused by some trick of his imagination or not, the experience had certainly been most uncanny. The mere remembrance of it sent a creepy feeling down his spine.

"Oh, come on," muttered Rawdon, as if urging his weaker self not to show the white feather. "Come on, and get it over."

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He slipped out of bed ; then paused for a few seconds while he made sure that no one else in the big room was awake. From all round came the sound of heavy breathing ; it was only in the corner in which the bed occupied by Maddox was situated that perfect stillness reigned. Was the prefect awake, or was he so soundly asleep that his breathing was inaudible ? It was an important question, and one difficult to decide. Rawdon cleared his throat with a subdued "Ahem," but no notice was taken : clearly Maddox was in the land of dreams.

The boy put on his socks and his jacket. He felt for his candle end and matches, and, drawing them from his pocket, carried them in his left hand as he crept towards the door. He held his breath as he reached the end of the prefect's bed, fearing lest Maddox should rise up suddenly and ask him what he was doing ; but nothing happened. With infinite care he turned the handle, and stole out into the passage.

"If only I find them hanging on that same old peg," he thought ; "then there'll be no more need to worry."

In semi-darkness the long landing seemed to stretch away into infinity. Nearly opposite the head of the stairs was a gas jet, lowered to a mere bead of flame, but kept burning all night in case of emergency. Rawdon began to move towards it ; then he stopped dead.

"Good-night !"

He spoke the words below his breath ; then for an instant stood with his mouth wide open. For a moment,



A dark shape had come into view.

away yonder at the head of the stairs, a dark shape had come into view, then vanished, as if descending to the floor below. Silently it passed out of sight like a moving shadow, and it might have been some fancy of an over-excited brain which made the boy think he had seen a figure wearing an oilskin coat, and a sou'-wester drawn well down upon his head. It came into view and vanished again without a sound.

“Wa—what on earth was that?” gasped Rawdon.

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He felt the same cold chill as he had done when the dummy figure had moved away from the window in Inch's study. Could there be some defect in his eyesight which caused these startling illusions? With this thought came a recollection of Bream's assertion that he was "going dotty."

"It's to be hoped I'm not going off my head," he muttered.

Rawdon shivered; which might have been due to his airy costume and the coldness of the night. But there can be no doubt that he was getting "rattled," and it needed only a very slight sound behind him to make him start and turn sharply round. The wonder was he did not give vent to his feelings with a yell. The whole place seemed alive with phantoms to-night; for now, between him and the shelter of his dormitory, another dark form was moving on the landing. It came towards him, paused for a few seconds, then stole on again.

As if in some nightmare, Rawdon stood rooted to the floor, unable to move. It was just when the strain seemed to have become unendurable that he recognized the form as being that of Maddox, muffled up in a navy blue dressing-gown. But even after this discovery had been made, the feeling of alarm continued, owing to the strange behaviour of the prefect. Though he must by this time have seen Rawdon, he said nothing, nor did he quicken his pace. It was evident now that he was walking on tiptoe. Slowly he stole up to within a few

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feet of the younger boy ; then halted, and stood peering at him for several seconds in silence.

“Hallo!” said Maddox, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

“Hallo!” gasped Rawdon.

“By Jove!” began the other in a tone of relief. “I thought you were walking in your sleep, and I was afraid to wake you. I heard you tossing about and muttering before you got out of bed. What in the name of fate are you doing?”

There was no reply ; but a moment later something trickled out of Rawdon’s almost nerveless fingers and fell to the floor. The senior stooped down and picked up a piece of candle.

“Oho!” he murmured. “Where are you off to with this?”

He waited a moment, and receiving no answer, gave his cousin an impatient dig in the ribs.

“Why don’t you speak? Look here, my boy. I’ve no wish to get you into a row on the last night of the term. You can go back to bed, and no more need be said about it ; but I want to know what you’re doing. What’s the matter with you?”

The last inquiry sounded friendly. Feeling all unstrung, and as if he must tell some one his troubles, Rawdon blurted out an unexpected reply.

“I was going down to see if Inch’s oilskins had been found.”

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The prefect threw back his head with a jerk of astonishment; then his burly form seemed to stiffen.

“How did you know they were lost?” he inquired sharply.

In a calmer moment Rawdon might have remembered his own decision that, if he made a confession, it would be wise to tell the whole story and keep nothing back; but he was seized now with a desire to keep Bream from getting into trouble. Taking care to make no reference to the part played by his chum, he gave a hurried account of his adventure with “Jack Salt.” He thought it best not to describe the movement of the dummy figure, nor his recent fright out here on the landing. Both might have been freaks of fancy, and to drag them in might make the entire statement seem untrue from start to finish.

“I wish I’d never done such a stupid thing,” he concluded. “But of course it was only meant for a joke.”

For a few moments Maddox maintained a stony silence. When he spoke, it was merely to repeat his former question.

“How did you know the oilskin and sou’-wester were lost?”

“I’ve just been telling you. When I came back to look at the figure the things weren’t there.”

“D’you know that there was an envelope in one of the pockets of the coat containing some sheets of stamps which were worth a lot of money?”

DOUBLE DUMMY.

"Yes."

"Hum. I suppose you found the envelope when you were dressing up the figure. You didn't mention that, did you?"

"No; I—I suppose I didn't."

"But I understood Inch to say that the envelope was sealed in readiness to be sent by registered post, so it seems queer that you should have known what was inside it."

Rawdon began to realize that, in his attempt to save Bream, he himself was getting into deep water. It was just what he had been afraid would happen if he made only a partial confession to Inch.

"How did you know?" persisted the prefect.

"Know what?"

"That there were foreign stamps in the envelope."

"Oh—er—the letter was addressed to a firm of dealers."

"And you mean to tell me you don't know what's become of that coat?" demanded Maddox.

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"Was any one with you when you rigged up this figure?"

"No."

"You're sure of that?"

"Yes."

There was an ominous pause. Rawdon was a bad liar even in defence of a friend, and he felt that his



“I’ll swear it was only meant for a joke.”

last two replies had not been given with the ring of good coin.

“I say,” he began hurriedly. “I’ll swear it was only meant for a joke. You don’t doubt that what I’ve been telling you is true, I suppose?”

“I do,” returned the prefect shortly; “I doubt it very much.”

“Why?”

DOUBLE DUMMY.

"Because you weren't alone. That chap Bream was with you. It was a put-up job between you two."

"H—how did you know that?" gasped Rawdon.

"I guessed it, because I happened to see you two scoot out from the concert. You see, you've told me two deliberate lies; so how can you expect me to believe the rest of that silly yarn?"

Rawdon was too flabbergasted to make any reply. He did attempt to say something, but an inarticulate gurgle was the only result.

"Of course, I see now what it is," continued the senior. "You two kids cribbed those oilskins and hid them away; now you've got the wind up, and think it's about time you put them back. All that rot about making a dummy figure can be cut out. Now, just listen to me, my boy. You stand a good chance of getting into a serious row, and for Aunt Anne's sake I don't want that to happen. If you'll tell me where those things are hidden, I'll go down now and put them back in Inch's study. If he finds them there in the morning he won't make any more fuss."

"I can't do that," protested Rawdon. "I know no more what became of them than you do yourself."

In the brief period of silence which followed a dreadful suspicion began to take shape in the prefect's mind. Until this moment he would never have thought his cousin might ever prove dishonest. Was it possible that these two youngsters had torn open the letter and

DOUBLE DUMMY.

stolen the stamps? In what other way could Rawdon have discovered what the sealed envelope contained? Now he was trying to cover up his tracks by declaring that he did not know where the missing garments had been put. Of course, when the coat was found, it would also be discovered that the letter was no longer in the pocket.

“Why on earth don’t you tell me what you’ve been doing?” hissed Maddox.

“I have—I’ve told you all I know.”

Maddox gave vent to what sounded almost like a groan. In a flash he realized what would be the consequences if he were obliged to expose his cousin as a thief. Aunt Anne would be just about heart-broken, and it would rob the family reunion at Christmas of all its customary gaiety and warmth. Yet, if what he feared was true, Inch had been robbed, and to shield the culprit would be to countenance the crime.

“You young fool, can’t you see I want to get you out of this mess if I can? Why don’t you say something?”

“Because I’ve nothing more to say.”

“But those stamps—that’s what matters. Whoever took the coat must have taken that letter along with it.”

There was no reply, and it seemed as if what stock of patience Maddox possessed had come to an end.

“I’ll give you one more chance, Harry. Will you tell me what you’ve done with those oilskins?”

DOUBLE DUMMY.

"It's no good you asking that. I don't know who took them or where they are."

"Very well," said Maddox in a rasping tone. "If you won't, you won't; but you'll have to go with me to Inch the first thing in the morning, and explain what happened as best you can. Now, get back to bed."

The pair returned to the dormitory, all the other occupants of which were in blissful unconsciousness of what had taken place. The door was softly closed by the prefect, and Rawdon crept back between the sheets, feeling positively sick with dismay. Figuratively speaking, he had brought the roof down not only on his own head, but on Bream's as well.

"What a fool I've been!" he thought. "I might have guessed that Maddox wasn't asleep. Why didn't I leave it till morning?"

From its rash beginning to its disastrous end this unlucky venture had shaken his nerves completely, and for the first time in his life he pulled the bedclothes completely over his head and lay all of a tremble. His mind had just conjured up a recollection of that ghostly figure he had seen on the landing; he almost fancied it might be lurking somewhere in the darkness near his bed.

"Bream said I was going off my head, and that's about what's happened," he pondered. "Perhaps I never did rig up that dummy figure; I just imagined that I did and that afterwards I saw it move. It's got

on my brain, and I shall always be fancying I see it somewhere."

In time he grew a little calmer. It was very stuffy under the bedclothes; he threw them back, and lay thinking what chance might still remain of his being able to prove that Bream was in no way responsible for what had happened. Presently he became conscious of a draught of cold air, which seemed to be coming from somewhere into the room. He turned, then raised his head from his pillow.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed below his breath. "Who's done that?"

A gray patch in the darkness showed that the door of the dormitory was standing nearly wide open. Yet the boy could have sworn that Maddox had closed it a short time ago when they both returned to bed; he remembered hearing the click of the latch. Again there came to him a recollection of that gliding shadow, and a sudden panic seized him. He flopped down, and once more drew sheets and blankets over his head.

And only a few hours ago Bream had said, "*You have got a nerve!*"

IV.

INCH was a person rather given to putting things off till the last moment, and even within half an hour of bedtime a good bit of his packing still remained to be done. The contents of his bookcase, for instance, had not yet been touched. After the conversation with Maddox, which had been interrupted by Bream's inquiry about trains, he had returned to his study determined to finish his preparations for departure on the morrow.

"These books won't take long," he muttered, as he lifted the lid from the packing-case.

But two minutes later Strove, the captain of the school, looked in to say good-bye, as there might not be time to do so in the morning; and he was followed by Carston, who had much to say about old times. The net result of it all was that, when at last the other occupants of the study corridor began to move off to bed, the work of filling the wooden box had not even been begun.

"Hang it all!" growled Inch, "I must get on with it. I shall miss my train if I leave it till to-morrow."

His school life was practically ended, and he saw no harm in staying up an extra half-hour. There was little chance that any one would notice the light still burning in his study. Even if Mr. Barr, the house-master, did

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come along, he would merely make some semi-humorous remarks about waste of gas and the advisability of getting things done at the proper time.

The silence which had now fallen on this part of the house promised freedom from further interruptions, and Inch set himself to the task of packing his books. First, he took from the box a hank of stout cord which he meant to fasten round it. He measured it to make sure he had enough, then tossed it aside. A nail or two would have to be driven into the wooden lid; but that could be done in the morning, as it would never do to start hammering at that time of night. There was still a space left after the books had been packed, and into this he tossed the loose papers which he had routed out of a drawer and left lying on his table. Glancing round to see if there were anything else to go in the case, he noticed something on the floor, and stooping down he picked it up.

“Where did this come from?” he muttered, with a puzzled look.

What he now held in his hand was a half-sheet of paper, on which, in bold capital letters, were printed the words JACK SALT. Inch stared at it for a time; then came to the conclusion that it must have dropped from one of his books, or fallen out of the litter he had just swept up from the table. No doubt it dated back to the time when his friends were inclined to chaff him about his seafaring experiences, though for the life of



"I expect this was Carston's doing."

him he could not recall when or how it had come into his possession.

"I expect this was Carston's doing," pondered Inch, with a smile.

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He crushed the paper in his hand and tossed it aside ; but as he did so his expression changed, and his brow was puckered with a frown. The words JACK SALT had served to remind him of the loss of his oilskin coat and of the all-important letter.

“I do wish fellows would leave one’s things alone,” he growled. “I should hope no one’s bagged it and doesn’t mean to bring it back.”

It was the first time such a thought had entered his mind. It seemed impossible that there could be any thief in the house who would make off with such queer plunder as a sou’-wester and an oilskin coat ; yet, had the things simply been borrowed, they would almost certainly have been returned ere now. Inch was beginning to feel tired. He opened his folding deck chair and sat down to rest.

“I do hope to goodness those things haven’t been stolen,” he pondered. “It’s the letter I care most about. If that’s lost, it means I may be called upon to fork out twenty quid.”

He tried to dismiss the idea of deliberate theft as being out of the question, but it still lingered in his mind. After all, there were dishonest people in the world, and the most astonishing things were sometimes done by persons who had become victims of kleptomania.

“Twenty quid !” growled Inch. “I could never pay that out of my own pocket.”

His parents were not wealthy, and to have to come

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down on them for the amount named, as the result of what they would regard as his own carelessness, would mar the pleasure of the coming Christmas. He would have to report the matter to Mr. Barr in the morning, though he hated the idea of ending up his career at Shalebury by creating a disturbance which might cast reflection on the school itself.

"There's never been a case of thieving ever since I've been here," he muttered. "But I must tell Barr if the things aren't found."

He leant back in his chair and closed his eyes, trying to find some answer to the problem. The next thing he became conscious of was an uneasy feeling of being cold and stiff, and a vague wonder as to where he was.

"I must have been asleep," he murmured, with a prodigious yawn. "By Jove," he added, as he glanced at his watch, "it's half-past twelve!"

He rose, folded up his chair, and turned out the gas. He passed out of his study, and being on ground so familiar that he could have walked it blindfold, did not trouble to use the small electric torch he had in his pocket as he made his way along the corridor. He reached the end of the passage, then abruptly came to a halt.

"What was that?"

The hall was in darkness; but from the direction of the main entrance had come a rasping sound, as if somebody had just shot one of the bolts of the big front door.

DOUBLE DUMMY.

Inch guessed instantly what it meant: the house-master had sat up later than usual, and was only now making his accustomed round to see that doors and windows on the ground floor were properly fastened.

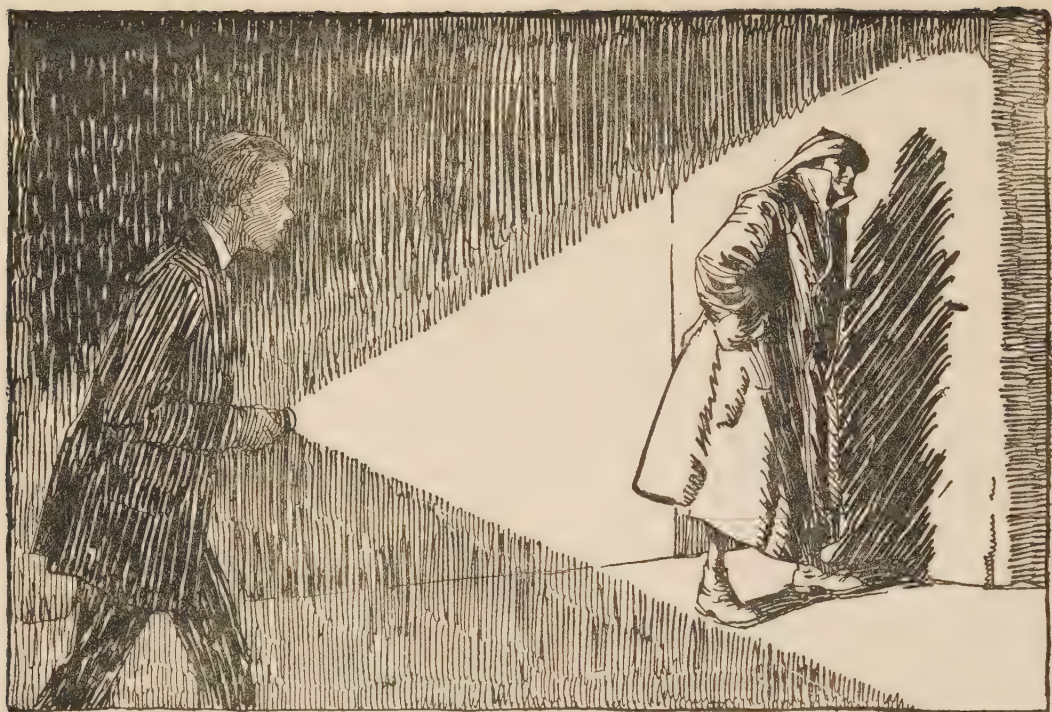
“Better not let him know I’ve been down here all this time,” thought Inch, and turning, tiptoed softly back along the passage.

He halted outside his own study. Mr. Barr would not visit this corridor, so all he had to do was to wait till the coast was clear, and then slip off up to bed. For some reason it never struck him as being a trifle odd that the master should be making his round without a light.

“I’ll give him ten minutes, and then scoot up to bed,” decided Inch.

Time always seems to pass slowly when one stands waiting for something in the dark. Inch realized this, and curbed his impatience, being determined not to move too soon. At length he felt convinced that the ten minutes must be up. He drew his electric torch from his pocket, intending to glance at his watch; then he suddenly became rigid. The silence had been broken by the creak of a loose board at the end of the corridor. Almost instinctively the prefect realized that Mr. Barr would not go creeping about his own house with a stealthy cat-like tread. Then who was this now coming down the passage?

For a moment Inch waited; then he switched on his



The brilliant beam had fallen upon a strange figure not more than ten feet from him.

electric torch. From the way he started it might have been supposed that the little battery had given him a shock. The brilliant beam had fallen upon a strange figure not more than ten feet from him. It was that of a man in an oilskin coat, his face half hidden by a sou'-wester worn low over his forehead.

"Hullo! what are you——"

What followed all happened in a few seconds. Before Inch had time to complete his question the intruder came at him with a rush, and the way in which the movement was made showed that this was no practical joke. Inch was not particularly strong, but he had plenty of pluck, and had played for the house Fifteen. He flung himself forward and collared low.

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There were a shock and a crash. Scarcely conscious of a bruised shoulder, Inch scrambled to his feet, ready to defend himself against a fresh attack. He tried to remember some boxing hints which Carston had once given him; then he became aware of the fact that his adversary seemed in no hurry to rise. For any sign of movement he made, the fellow might have curled himself up and gone to sleep. The electric torch, which had fallen on the floor, was still burning, and it was the work of a moment to grab it up and ascertain what had happened. The man lay motionless, a thin stream of blood beginning to trickle from his forehead where he had struck it against a coil of hot-water pipes as he fell.

“He’s stunned,” thought Inch. “Lucky for me.”

The sou’-wester had fallen off, and no longer concealed the stranger’s close-cropped bullet head and a face which seemed decidedly of the criminal type.

“Must be a burglar,” muttered Inch; “though he doesn’t seem to have any plunder with him. But—hang it all! these must be my oilskins.”

He had no time to wonder why the thief should have taken a fancy to “Jack Salt’s” nautical attire, for there was a still more pressing question to be settled. It was evident that the man was merely stunned, and there was no telling how soon he would recover. If left even for a few moments unwatched he might escape; yet when he did come round and regain his feet, it was doubtful

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whether Inch would be equal to dealing with him single-handed.

“What am I to do?”

Acting on the first idea that came into his head, the prefect dashed into his study, and returned with the hank of cord intended for the packing-case. His electric torch, placed on the floor, gave him sufficient light; and in a few seconds he had put a lashing round the man's ankles, secured with knots which it would take any one some time to undo in the dark.

Breathing more freely, Inch rose to his feet. With a parting glance at the intruder he ran off down the corridor, and a few moments later was thumping with his fist on the house-master's bedroom door. It seemed an age before there was any response, but presently the prefect's drum solo took effect. A sleepy voice growled out something, and there was a sound of movement inside the room.

“I say—I say,” expostulated Mr. Barr, as he opened the door and peered out on to the landing. “No need to hammer the house down. Is that you, Inch? What on earth is the matter?”

“A burglar, sir,” was the reply. “Down in the study corridor.”

“Never!” ejaculated Mr. Barr. “Hullo! who's this—Maddox?”

“I heard a row, sir,” explained Maddox, who had slipped out of bed at the first sound of some one thump-

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ing on a door. "I thought I had better see what it was."

There was a moment's pause while Inch, in a few breathless sentences, described what had happened. Mr. Barr dived into his room, and returned with a lighted candle.

"Is the fellow armed?" he inquired. "D'you think it's likely that he's got a pistol?"

"I can't say, sir," answered Inch. "All I know is he's wearing my oilskins."

"Your oilskins!" ejaculated Maddox. "Great Scot!"

He made off along the landing, and was half-way to the head of the stairs when Mr. Barr called him back.

"Steady, Maddox," cautioned the master. "If he's armed, we may need to be careful what we're about."

The man was already showing signs of returning consciousness when the trio reached the spot where he lay. Presently he opened his eyes, and after blinking in a stupid way at the candle flame, slowly raised himself into a sitting posture with his back against the wall. As he did so the oilskin coat fell open, and thus exposed a curious garb which at once attracted the master's eye.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Barr. "Now I understand. You two fellows stay with him, while I just go to the telephone and ring up the police."

The speaker walked off quickly down the passage; as he did so, Maddox bent down and thrust his hand into a pocket of the oilskin.

DOUBLE DUMMY.

“Good egg!” he cried. “Here it is—your letter!”

“I’d forgotten all about that,” muttered Inch, with a sigh of relief.

“I hadn’t,” said Maddox. “I thought of it the moment you said he was wearing your things.”



“Even now I don’t know just how it all happened.”

V.

As the train started again Rawdon leant forward and spoke to his cousin. Three people had just got out of the carriage, and, for the first time on their homeward journey, the two Shaleburians had a compartment to themselves.

“Look here!” began the younger boy eagerly: “even now I don’t know just how it all happened. We heard that a burglar had been caught wearing ‘Jack Salt’s’

DOUBLE DUMMY.

things. Later on you said you'd told Inch about the dummy figure, and that there was no need for me and Bream to be dragged into the affair."

Maddox laughed.

"Why on earth should a burglar want to dress up as 'Jack Salt'?" demanded Rawdon. "And how did he get the things?"

"In the first place, he wasn't what you'd call a burglar; he was a convict who had escaped from Wear-down prison. D'you tumble to it now?"

Rawdon's expression showed that he was still mystified.

"Well," began Maddox, "from what you told me, and from what we learnt from the man himself, I think I can explain the whole thing. This unfortunate beggar—for I can't help feeling sorry for him—had been at large for the best part of two days. How he managed to get as far as Shalebury goodness knows; anyway, he was famished and feeling pretty desperate when he arrived at Barr's. Inch had left his window open, and as there was no light visible in that part of the building, our friend must have thought every one had gone to bed. So he climbed into the study and shut the window behind him."

"But when was that?" interrupted Rawdon.

"Just before you arrived to rig up 'Jack Salt.' He dived under the table, and that's where he must have been while you were at work on the dummy."

DOUBLE DUMMY.

"My hat!" gasped Rawdon.

"When you'd gone he crept out, took the coat and sou'-wester, and put them on. They were just the sort of things he wanted to hide his convict's uniform."

"Then it was the fellow himself I saw moving. Go on."

"He put the cricket bag and the chair back on the floor, because his first thought was to get out of the window, and the dummy figure was rather in his way. Then, as the coast seemed clear and he was ravenous with hunger, he thought he'd search round in the hope of finding some food. He moved off into another study, and that's where he was when you came back with Bream."

"We never saw him."

"No, because he'd cleared off before you searched the studies. He heard you two kids go into Inch's den, and thought the place was becoming too thickly populated to be safe. He made off quickly down the passage; but in the hall he had a narrow shave of running into some one—old Martin I think it must have been. Anyway, he skipped off upstairs, and locked himself in a bathroom, where he stayed till he made sure every one was asleep."

"And I must have seen him just when he was going downstairs," put in Rawdon.

"That's about all," concluded Maddox. "When he reached the hall he tried first to escape by the front door,

DOUBLE DUMMY.

but he found some difficulty in getting it unfastened. He changed his mind, and decided to get out through the same window by which he'd come in. The result was he met Inch, and you know already how the affair ended."

"All I can say is——" began Rawdon.

"That you won't be such an ass again," suggested Maddox, laughing. "It's a question which was the bigger dummy—you or 'Jack Salt.'"

PATCH.

By ALICE SOPHIA JACKSON.

I.

CECIL FORD stood at the garden gate and looked up and down the white, dusty road, with a hard, hard lump in his throat, and a very unpleasant smarting in his eyes. Everything was just as horrid as it could be, he thought, as he rubbed his eyes with his very grubby fingers, trying to stop them from smarting. First there was Daddy being so badly wounded at the Front that the doctors had had to cut his right leg off—Daddy! who was such a fine cricketer, and used to play for his county. Then Mummy went to London to stay near Daddy's hospital till he could come home, leaving Cecil with old Cook and Jane the housemaid. Of course, Cecil was glad she should go to Daddy, he must want her so badly; and every day there was a little letter from her, saying how Daddy was, and hoping Cecil did not miss her very much. But he did—he missed her dreadfully—though he tried hard to be brave and not mind; and Patch, his little fox terrier, who had been given to him as a small, fat puppy, was a great comfort to him. He always seemed to know when Cecil was feeling lonesome and miserable, and missing Mummy, and he used to come and lick his face and jump up at him.

And now Patch was lost! Nothing had been seen of

PATCH.

him for nineteen hours : not since Jane took him with her to Glebe Farm when she went to get some eggs yesterday evening. Jane had stayed talking to Mrs. Lister, the farmer's wife, a long time ; and when she came out Patch was nowhere to be seen, so she made sure he had



HIS LITTLE FOX TERRIER WAS A GREAT COMFORT TO HIM.

run off home, tired of waiting. But Patch had never been home, and Cecil had had to go to bed without him for the first time since he had been given to him. But for what seemed a very long time—hours and hours, he was sure—Cecil lay awake listening, to hear if Patch had come home and was whining to be let in. Jane was very sorry

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when nothing was seen of Patch next morning, and she took Cecil to the Glebe Farm to ask if they had found him. But that was no good, and they only had that long, hot walk for nothing. Now it was afternoon, but still there were no signs of Patch.

As Cecil stood very sadly at the gate he heard a little clicking sound, and he knew that meant that old Jenks the roadmender was at work not far off breaking stones. He and Cecil were great friends, so when he heard that sound, the boy pushed open the gate and set off down the road to have a chat with him, and tell him the sad news.

“Fine and warm it is to-day, ain’t it?” said old Jenks cheerily. But when he saw how sober his little friend looked, he added, “Why, whatever is the matter? You do look sadly.”

“I’ve lost Patch, my little dog,” said Cecil; and then the tiresome tears came rushing into his eyes, and he had to turn away and pretend to hunt for something in the hedge, so as to hide them.

“Oh, deary me to-day!” said Jenks, “lost your little dog, have you?—why, that is a real bit of misfortune. How did you come to do that?”

So Cecil told him all about it; and when he had finished, Jenks said,—

“What sort of a little dog might he be? I don’t just call him to mind.”

“He’s a fox terrier,” said Cecil, “and he has a black

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patch over one eye, and he can do all sorts of tricks. Daddy taught him ; he's ever so clever."

"Oh, he can do tricks, can he?" said Jenks, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. "Handy sort of little dog for them circus folk, I expect."

"That's just what Daddy said," Cecil answered eagerly ; "he said he ought to be in a circus."

"Well, then, you may depend upon it," said Jenks, nodding his head very gravely, "that's just where he is now."

"In a circus !" gasped Cecil. "But how could he be?—there isn't one anywhere near."

"Not now there ain't, but there was," said Jenks. "When I were coming down the Renton road last night I met one that had been over at Silwood, and were going on to Renton—leastways they asked me the way there. And now I come to think of it, there was a dog whining and howling something terrible inside one of the vans. Once he got his head out, and he were a little terrier, sure enough. Likely that was your little dog."

"Oh, it must have been !" cried Cecil, in a great state of excitement. "What shall I do? How far is it to Renton? Where would the circus stay, and do you think they will let me have Patch back if I give them all the money out of my savings box?"

Poor old Jenks looked quite dazed at having so many questions to answer at once, and at last he said slowly, "It's a matter of seven miles to Renton, but I doubt

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whether they'd be stopping there after to-night. They've got to get to Ryther in time for the fair there on Wednesday ; so they said."

"Then I must start at once," said Cecil, trying to keep his voice from shaking ; and he turned round and set off down the road at a good pace.



"STOP! STOP!" HE SHOUTED.

"Nay, nay," old Jenks called out after him. "Come you back, Master Ford ; don't you go off like that. You can't never walk to Renton ; it's a goodish step, you know, seven miles is."

"But I must go ; I truly must," Cecil called out.

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“Good-bye ; I’ll come and tell you when I find Patch.”

Old Jenks scrambled to his feet, and began to hobble after the boy. “Stop ! stop !” he shouted ; “go with Carrier Mason, if so be as you must go. He’ll take you for threepence to Renton station, and then you can ask for the circus people.”

Cecil nodded ; that was certainly a good idea—he would get there much quicker in the carrier’s cart. He went back home, slipped upstairs into his own room, and got all his money out of his savings box and tied it up very tight in his handkerchief ; then he ran downstairs and out of the house without any one seeing him.

He had a long wait at the cross-roads for the carrier’s cart—so long that he began to be afraid that perhaps Mason had passed and he was too late ; but at last he saw a small object, like a fly, come crawling up the long hill. How slowly it came, and Cecil felt so impatient to be off ! Just think if he missed the circus, and they took his dear Patch right away from him ! At last the cart came up to him. Old Mason was dozing, and took no notice ; but the wise old horse saw the small waiting figure and pulled up of his own accord. Mason woke with a jerk when the cart stopped.

“Get on with you,” he said to the horse gruffly. Then, catching sight of Cecil, he leant down and asked, “Was you wanting to get in ?”

PATCH.

Cecil nodded. He knew it was no use trying to make Mason hear—he was much too deaf. He scrambled up and seated himself by the old man's side, and the horse started again at once. Jenks was right, thought Cecil—it certainly *was* a goodish step to Renton. But he did wish they could go a little faster; it was so hot, and he began to want his tea very badly.

Mason asked no questions, and did not seem to think there was anything strange in a small boy of seven setting off by himself to Renton; but he roused up enough presently to hold out his hand for his fare, and when Cecil had put three very hot pennies into it, he slipped them into his bag and dozed off once more.

At last, after what seemed to Cecil hours of weary jogging and jolting, they got in sight of houses, and soon pulled up in the station yard at Renton. Here the cart stopped and Cecil slipped down, and giving a nod of farewell to Mason, turned round to begin his search for Patch. He felt very shy and rather forlorn, and it was a minute or two before he could pluck up his courage to ask the porters if they could tell him where the circus was. But the first porter he asked was very hot and hurried, and only growled out,—

“Don't know.” The next was crosser still, and told him to get out of the road and not come bothering folks. Cecil had not the heart to try again after such unkind treatment, and was leaving the station yard, hoping he might meet some one who would be able to direct him,

PATCH.

when a rough-looking lad, with a cigarette in his mouth, lounged up to him and asked,—

“Was you wanting to know where the circus is?”

“Yes,” said Cecil eagerly, hoping to have found help at last. “Oh, can you tell me which way to go?”

“I can tell you all right,” drawled the lad; “but the point is, what are you going to give me for it?”



THE BOY WATCHED HIM WITH GREEDY EYES.

Now, Cecil had only 3s. 10½d. altogether, and he felt sure he would want all that to buy Patch back from the circus people, because he had heard his Daddy say he was a very valuable little dog, so he got very red and stammered, “I’m afraid I can’t give you very much; only—only sixpence, if that will do.”

PATCH.

“ Let’s see your sixpence,” said the lad sharply.

Cecil tugged and pulled at his money, which was tied up in his handkerchief and wedged into the very small pocket of his knickers. The boy watched him with greedy eyes ; but Cecil, very much taken up with pulling out his money, did not notice this ; and when at last he had got it out safely, he began to untie the knots in order to get six pennies out. But before he had managed to get one knot undone, the boy made a quick grab at the handkerchief, snatched it out of Cecil’s hands, and made off at top speed.

II.

FILLED with rage and despair at such daring robbery, and seeing all hope of getting Patch back disappearing with the money, Cecil began to shout as loud as he could, "Stop, stop! give me back my money," and to run after the young thief as fast as his legs would carry him. But, alas! so afraid was Cecil of losing sight of the other boy, that he did not look where he was going, and tripping over a loose stone fell heavily to the ground.

"Hullo! what's the damage, sonny?" said a kind voice, and strong hands helped him carefully to his feet; and, looking up, Cecil saw a tall Australian soldier bending over him. Half-dazed by his fall and by the pain of his knee, which he had cut badly, and above all by the thought that his dear Patch was now lost to him for ever, Cecil at first could do nothing but sob and rub his eyes with his very dirty hands.

"Cheer up!" said the Australian. "Why, you're far too brave a lad to cry for a cut knee, I'm sure."

"It's not that," sobbed Cecil, much distressed at being thought a cry-baby. "It's because that boy has stolen all my money, and now I shan't be able to buy Patch back again."

"And how much might all your money be?" asked

PATCH.

his new friend, who was busy wiping the blood and dirt off Cecil's knee.

"Three and tenpence halfpenny," answered Cecil very sadly; "and it was all I had in the world."

"My! but that's a lot to lose," said the Australian sympathetically. Then, looking at the woe-begone little figure, he went on, "Seems to me as if a cup of tea wouldn't do you any harm, and perhaps we could get some one to tidy you up a bit."

What with his fall in the dusty road and his cut knee, which had bled a good deal, Cecil's white sailor suit had got into a sad state by this time, and he agreed readily to this suggestion of his new-found friend, who told him his name was Dick Taylor. Together they went down the High Street till they came to a tea-shop, where, after ordering some tea, Dick asked the waitress if she could see to the little boy, who had had a bad fall. The waitress, who was a good-natured girl, at once took Cecil away and washed his knee carefully and tied it up for him, and also brushed his suit; so that, after he had washed his face and hands, he looked quite a different boy.

Tea was all ready by this time, and very glad Cecil was of it, as it seemed such a long time since his dinner. Dick Taylor chatted pleasantly with him, and told him that he had left a little boy, just Cecil's age, "down under" when he came over to fight the Germans. So then Cecil told him all about his father, and how he had



TOGETHER THEY WENT DOWN THE HIGH STREET.

PATCH.

been so badly wounded in France that they had been obliged to cut his leg off, and what a famous cricketer he had been.

Dick at once asked his name and regiment; and when Cecil told him, he said very eagerly: "Why, if it isn't a real bit of good luck my coming across you like this! I've had some famous games of cricket with your Daddy at the Front; and more than that, he once saved me from being taken prisoner by the Germans when I was helping a chum along who had got badly hurt. He couldn't go fast, poor chap, and the Boches would have caught us sure; but your Daddy came up, and between us we got poor Jim back into safety."

Cecil, greatly excited, smiled happily up into the tall Australian's face, forgetting for the moment all his troubles; and Dick beamed at him just as happily, saying cheerfully, "It does seem just right that I should come across you when you're in a bit of a hole, and should have a chance of helping you."

Cecil nodded; but his smile faded, and he looked very sad again as he remembered Patch and the loss of his money.

"Cheer up," said Dick; "you tell me all about your troubles, and perhaps I can give you a helping hand, same as your Daddy did to me and Jim."

At once Cecil poured out his whole story; and Dick listened very carefully, and at the end remarked briskly, "Well, the first thing is to find out where this

PATCH.

circus has taken root, and then we'll see if we can't run your little dog to earth." And when the waitress brought them their bill, he asked her if she had heard of any circus being at Renton that day. The girl hadn't, but told him whereabouts the circuses always pitched, when they paid a visit to the town. Dick thanked her, and the two companions left the tea-shop and set off in search of the circus.

It was not very easy to find the field where it might be ; but people were very kind in directing them, and once or twice a man would turn and walk with them for a bit so as to be sure they didn't miss the way. One quite old man did this, and when Dick told him not to trouble to come so far, he seemed almost hurt and answered,—

"It shouldn't be a trouble to help a soldier who has come such a long way to fight for us ;" and they got so friendly that Dick told him why they wanted to find the circus. The old man shook his head when he heard their reason, and said gloomily, "I know those circus people, they're Farrant's lot ; leastways that's what they call themselves, and a worse set of thieving rascals never travelled the roads. They've been warned off from coming here before now, because folks lost so many of their fowls and ducks, and I don't know how they dare show their faces here again ; but I suppose they think the soldiers from the camp will crowd their show, and so they'll do a good business."

PATCH.

When the old man had left them, with a few parting directions, Dick said to Cecil cheerily, "Don't you get too down-hearted, sonny; I'll find out a way, see if I don't."

Soon after this, they reached the field where the circus had been pitched. It was not a very inviting looking show—the vans all looked so dirty, and so did the ragged children playing about in them. The horses were a most miserable sight—so thin, with their bones sticking out, and many of them with bad sores. Dick Taylor looked them over carefully, and shaking his head angrily said, "I'd like to get even with people who treat their horses like that." Then they paid their money and went into the biggest tent, which was already filling up fast. They went into the sixpenny seats, and managed to get into the front row. Cecil was shaking all over with excitement, and hardly knew how to sit still. Dick Taylor kept getting up and looking round the tent, and once or twice he nodded to some friend in uniform, or called out a greeting to a little knot of soldiers. There were a good many soldiers from the camp a few miles off, a few sailors, and some men who were home on leave.

The circus began at last, and though Cecil had always looked forward so much to seeing one, he found now he couldn't enjoy it one bit—he was straining his eyes all the time for a sight of Patch.

Dick didn't seem to enjoy the circus either, for he

was grumbling about the horses, which, he said, were all half-starved and dead beat into the bargain. There was a very smartly dressed man standing in the middle of the ring, holding a long whip in his hand, and some one close by told Dick that he was the owner of the circus. He had a hard, cruel face, and he used his long whip freely to try and force the poor, tired horses to jump and gallop. Cecil thought he had never seen such a horrid-looking man, and when he told Dick so he nodded, and said,—

“You’re about right there, youngster; for two pins I’d let him feel what that fine whip of his tastes like.”

It wasn’t at all an amusing circus; even the clown couldn’t make any one laugh. Perhaps, too, Cecil was sitting too close, for everything looked draggled and tawdry—not a bit glorious, as he had thought it would from some posters he had seen once. “Half a mile of glittering splendour” was how they had described one of their processions; but there was nothing glittering nor splendid about the clothes and general get-up of these poor folks, all of whom seemed to stand in fear of the tall ringmaster.

At last, just as Cecil was beginning to give up all hopes, the clown went out of the ring and came back dragging with him a very dejected-looking little dog, who kept his tail between his legs and seemed scared out of his wits. Cecil sprang up at sight of him, wild with excitement; but a moment after he sank back again, with a big sigh of disappointment.

PATCH.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick quickly; "isn't that your dog?"

"No," said Cecil mournfully, "that's not Patch; he was all white except for a black patch over one eye, and this dog has no black at all and a lot of big yellow spots."

"Oh, if that's all that's wrong," said Dick coolly, "I wouldn't make too sure; it's easy enough to change a dog's looks. Is he about the size of your dog?"

"Yes, he's just the same size," said Cecil eagerly, his hopes rising once more; "only he looks so different, because he always has such a cocky look and keeps his tail well up."

The clown then began to put the dog through some easy tricks, which he did with the same cowed, terrified air he had worn all the time. Cecil watched him intently, his heart thumping so that he almost choked. Suddenly he felt he could stand it no longer, but must know for certain one way or the other; so he called out in a shrill, excited voice, "Patch, Patch, come along then!" He did not call very loud and only a few people who were quite close to him heard, so that most of the audience were amazed by seeing the spiritless-looking little dog changed into a whirling mass of excitement, that tore like a white streak across the ring and sprang into the arms of a small boy in the front row.

The ringmaster at once hurried forward, and in a loud, bullying voice asked Cecil what he was doing with his dog, and how he dared call him off.

PATCH.

"Steady on a bit," said Dick, getting up and facing the angry man coolly; "if that dog's yours, what made him answer to his name like that for?"

"You just leave my dog alone," said the man, still more threateningly, "or I'll soon show you who he belongs to." And he made a sign to one or two of his



"YOU JUST LEAVE MY DOG ALONE."

helpers, who had lounged into the ring, to come and take Patch away. But Cecil only held him all the tighter, and looked despairingly at his friend for help. This was not long in coming, for Dick sprang on to a seat and called out in a clear, ringing voice that could be heard all over the tent,—

"Lads, are you going to sit there and see this little

PATCH.

chap's dog taken from him? His father's lost his leg at the Front, and now this rascal, who ought to be in the trenches himself, has stolen his dog from him, and——"

"You take care what you say," began the man furiously, but his words were drowned in a chorus of,—

"All right, mate, we'll see fair play; we'll soon settle his game." And from every part of the tent soldiers and sailors came vaulting over the benches, and swarmed into the ring in such numbers, and showed so plainly their intention to make things extremely unpleasant for any one who would wrong a soldier's boy, that the ringmaster and his men beat a hurried retreat, and were chased right out of the field by an indignant crowd of men.

Dick took no part in the disturbance; he had quite enough to do in steering Cecil, who still held Patch tightly in his arms, out of the tent and into a quiet part of the field. Then he stood looking down at the happy pair with great satisfaction, and yet with a good deal of perplexity. "Wish I knew just what to do with you two," he murmured half to himself, and then went on speaking to Cecil. "See here, youngster, how are we going to get you home? I must catch the 8.30 train, or I shall get into trouble; my leave's up to-morrow—" But before he got any further he was interrupted by Cecil, who cried out joyfully,—

"Why, there's Jane; what can she be doing here?"

"Looking for you, I should hope," replied Dick, in

PATCH.

great relief ; and so it appeared, for just then she caught sight of them and hurried up, exclaiming,—

“ Oh, Master Cecil, however you could go and run away like that, without ever a word to any one, I don’t know. And here’s Cook and me been looking for you all over ; and but for old Jenks telling me you had gone to the circus, and Mr. Dixon driving me over in his light cart, I don’t know whatever we should have done ; and how we were to tell your Ma you was lost, I can’t think.”

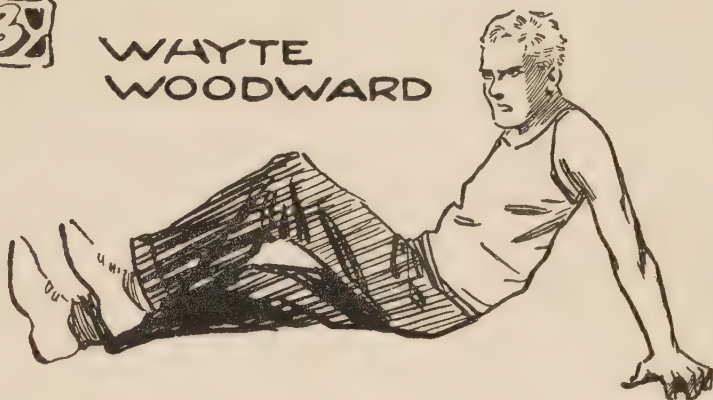
“ It’s all right, Jane ; Dick took care of me, and I’ve got Patch quite safe,” said Cecil rather sleepily ; for now that the excitement was over he began to feel very, very tired. Indeed he was so tired that he hardly knew what was happening. He heard Dick and Jane talking together, and presently found himself wedged into the butcher’s cart between Jane and Dixon. Then he roused up to thank Dick ever so much for all his help, and to beg him most earnestly to come and see him when next he got leave. After that he must have fallen asleep, for he remembered nothing more till he woke up the next morning and found Patch lying on his bed, looking a queer little object, it’s true, with daubs of white and yellow paint, but still his own dear, loving little Patch just the same.

“BATTLING FENLEY”

A STORY FOR BOYS



WAYTE
WOODWARD



“COME on, you fellows! Come on! There’s going to be a lovely scrap. Fenley’s going to leather Hinton. Fenley!”

A roar of laughter greeted the announcement.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the team of White Towers College were about to meet their deadly rivals of the Mapleton Grammar School.

It was going to be an exciting match.

White Towers had got to win, and the whole college were turning out to see their team cover itself with glory.

But, of the crowd of boys rushing toward the cricket field, those belonging to the Remove all stopped in

BATTLING FENLEY

incredulous amazement as Jack Harper's shouted news reached their ears.

"Chuck it, Harper! Don't be funny! No leg-pulling this afternoon! It isn't playing the game!" came in varied voices, all expressive of disbelief and disgust.

"No cock-and-bull tales for us, Harper!" admonished Leggy Hughes, captain of Remove, as the fellows crowded round Jack.

"I tell you it's true," he yelled, dancing with excitement. "If you don't believe me, come and see for yourselves. They're going to meet in the clearing down by the canal. It'll be all over in two rounds, I guess."

There were murmurs of much interest, for Jack Harper certainly seemed to be speaking the truth. He wouldn't dare play off such a joke on a match day.

Yet it seemed almost unbelievable that young Fenley, nervous, quiet little chap that he was, would dare to stand up to Ginger Hinton, the big bully of the Remove. Why, Fenley wasn't half Hinton's size; and besides, the kid had never been a fighter, funking scraps, even with the smaller chaps, since he had been at White Towers, though clever and sharp enough in all other ways.

He'd beaten Ginger Hinton in class in next to no time, so Hinton lost no opportunity of bullying the kid, when he believed it to be safe, and Fenley had never squealed about it.

BATTLING FENLEY

"See here, you fellows," cried Hughes, "if Fenley is really going to take Hinton on, it's pretty certain that Ginger'll eat him up in no time, and it's up to us to see fair play anyway."

There was a general chorus of agreement.

"Though why this is thus, I don't understand," Hughes went on; "the kid must have been goaded some, for he always struck me as being a feeble little cow——"

"That'll do for now, old man," Harper interrupted. "Fenley's my pal, and if either you—or anybody else——"

"Sorry," laughed Hughes good-naturedly. "I know you've a soft spot for Fenley, and he's not half a bad kid, if he weren't so funky. Come on! Let's go and see the scrap."

And full of excitement, the whole crowd moved off, the cricket match temporarily forgotten. Many half-envious glances were cast at Harper, the only fellow in Remove who would dare to be "cheeky" to Leggy Hughes, before whose eyes even the redoubtable Hinton quailed.

Arrived at the scene of the forthcoming conflict, they found Hinton waiting for his opponent. He lay full length on the green grass, the brilliant sun streaming down on his well-developed muscles and heavy, sullen face.

Nobody thought it necessary to speak to him.

BATTLING FENLEY

"Will you be 'ref,' Hughes?" asked Harper.

"Certainly," agreed the Remove captain. "What time do hostilities start?"

Harper looked at his watch.

"That's funny," he muttered; "the kid should have been here five minutes ago."

A sudden fear made him turn quickly to Hinton. Suppose Fenley had faked it!

"Hinton," he asked, "have you seen Fenley yet? You haven't had the scrap already and licked him, have you?"

"No, I haven't," growled the bully; "and it doesn't look as though I'm going to. Seems to me that your little friend's frightened to fight. I thought he would be. I'm going to see the match."

He rose to his feet, but Leggy Hughes stood in his way.

"You will give him another five minutes," he said calmly, and Hinton sat down again.

Slowly the five minutes passed, and still no sign of Fenley. The crowd began to grow restless, and soon openly contemptuous. Their remarks made Harper burn with shame for the boy whom he had openly acclaimed to be his pal. It became obvious, even to him, that Fenley had faked it. Better a bad licking than this—any day!

"Well, I don't think there's much need to wait any longer," said Hughes, trying hard to keep the sneer out



"Hinton," he asked, "have you seen Fenley yet?"

of his voice. He knew just how Harper was feeling, and felt sorry for him.

"No," cried a derisive voice. "The gladiator's got cold feet."

"Who said that?" angrily exclaimed Harper.

"I don't know," sneered Hinton, as he got up and

BATTLING FENLEY

slouched away. "But perhaps it was the ghost of 'Battling Fenley.'"

A huge roar of laughter greeted his last remark; for once the bully was almost popular.

"Battling Fenley! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Old Hinton's quite a wag!"

As the crowd dispersed in the direction of the cricket ground, yelling their amusement about Battling Fenley, Harper knew that the nickname would stick, that the gibe would follow Fenley wherever he went, that——

He turned quickly, as the sound of hard sobbing reached his quick ear. It seemed to come from behind the hedge. Going quickly towards the sound, he was horrified to find Fenley crouched on the ground, trembling in every limb and crying as though his heart would break.

"Fenley! Good heavens, Fenley!"

Slowly the boy lifted his tear-stained face. It was a delicate-looking face, all distorted now, but usually as saucy as a sparrow's.

Frank Fenley was an only child, and had had a soft time at home till he had been sent to White Towers by his legal guardian.

He was an orphan now.

His expression of abject terror changed to one of humble devotion as he looked at his hero. He scrambled to his feet.



"Fenley! Good heavens, Fenley!"

"Is it all right?" he asked in a scared whisper.
"Has he—have they gone?"

"Yes—they have gone," replied Harper slowly;
"and now I am going. You lay here, I suppose, all

BATTLING FENLEY

the time and heard what happened. Well, in future, Fenley, we—we are not pals."

He turned and walked rapidly away, unwilling that Fenley should see how deeply he was hurt—how utterly miserable he felt.

For a moment the younger boy stared unbelievably at his friend's quickly retreating back.

Then he flung himself down again on the grass and gave way to a fit of passionate grief.

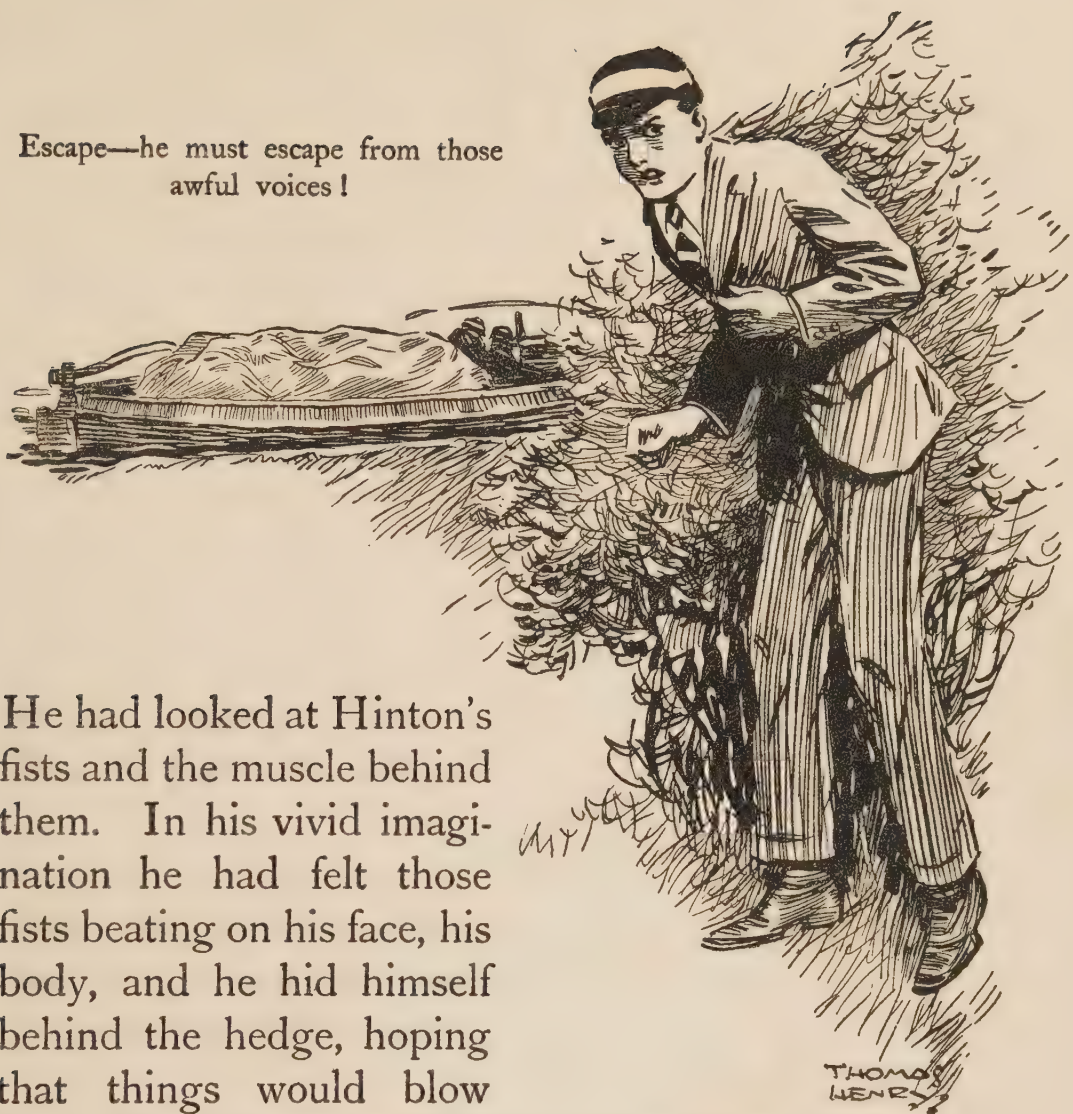
So this was the reward of his cowardice—to lose the only friend he had, the one person who mattered! Bitterly he repented his lack of courage. After all, Hinton could only have thrashed him—and the Remove would have respected him.

But Fenley shuddered as though in actual physical pain at the thought of being hammered. It was all his own silly fault, he told himself between sobs. Hinton had bullied him afresh that morning, and Harper had urged him to stand up to the bigger boy and wallop him, promising to stand by and see fair play.

Encouraged by his pal's confidence in him, and anxious to prove himself worthy of such a friendship, he had managed to screw himself up to the point of challenging the bully to fight.

Then, while Harper was cheerfully collecting the spectators, he had gone down to the place arranged for the scrap. There he had caught sight of Hinton, stripped for the fight—and his courage oozed out of him.

Escape—he must escape from those awful voices!



He had looked at Hinton's fists and the muscle behind them. In his vivid imagination he had felt those fists beating on his face, his body, and he hid himself behind the hedge, hoping that things would blow over, that Hinton would tire of waiting for him—anything, anything rather than meet those awful fists.

Then he had heard the jeering of the fellows in his form—"Battling Fenley!"

The derisive title rang anew in his ears, calling up a hot flush of shame to his pale cheeks. He knew the name would stick to him, be yelled after him by the smallest fag. And he would have to stand alone; he

BATTLING FENLEY

had forfeited Harper's friendship and protection. He had been a coward.

For a long time he sat there, with tightly-clenched hands and staring eyes. He could hear the cheering on the distant field. Soon those same voices would be yelling their contempt and scorn at him.

"Battling Fenley!" It was horrible—horrible!

Already he seemed to hear the cry, and sprang hurriedly to his feet.

Escape—he must escape from those awful voices! They would search him out, hound him on and on——

His eyes caught sight of a huge barge, laden with refuse, being towed slowly down the canal. It came near to the bank while the man on the tow-path changed with his mate at the tiller.

Fenley seized his opportunity with the frenzy of despair, and was soon hidden safely away among the rubble and refuse in the hold. Then he fell fast asleep.

When he awoke it was dark, and the barge was fastened to a quay just inside a lock where the canal ran into the Thames. There was no one in sight, and Fenley scrambled ashore. Ravenously hungry, he got some food and tea at a coffee-stall; then, dodging numerous policemen, he made his way to the docks. He found himself near a big foreign-looking ship which, a dock loungee informed him, was going to sea at once. Fenley smuggled himself aboard without being observed, and hid in one of the holds.

BATTLING FENLEY

Two months later, Fenley returned to White Towers College, in charge of his angry guardian. He had been discovered on board the Spanish tramp, and the captain had decided to take him to Mexico and back. The crew were instructed to see that the boy earned his keep, and he had been duly initiated into his duties, to the accompaniment of many kicks and few halfpence.

“I say, fellows, here’s Battling Fenley come back!”

“Hurrah! Battling Fenley! Hurrah! hurrah!”

“Come back to knock us all about. Ha! ha!”

Fenley flinched before the storm of shouts that greeted his appearance when, after his interview with the Head, he returned to his House.

It was impossible to move through the crowd that gathered around him as he stood, with bent head, listening to their gibes.

Ginger Hinton forced his way to Fenley’s side.

“Well, Mr. Fenley,” he sneered, “you’re a bit late for your appointment—over two months, in fact. But I’ve kept it open for you—nice of me, wasn’t it? I was sure you’d only been detained on important business——”

“Ha! ha! Ha! ha!” roared the Remove in chorus. “Did Guardy bring him back, then, when he recovered from his funny fit?”

“Here, leave the kid alone,” cried Leggy Hughes. “Let him have to-day in peace anyway—and, if he *has* been on sick leave——”

BATTLING FENLEY

"Thanks, Hughes," said Fenley quietly, "but I'm quite ready to meet Hinton now—any old time he likes."

Another burst of laughter greeted this challenge. "Good old Battling Fenley's at his heroics again! He ought to be heavyweight champion! Knock him out like you did before, Fenley! Ha! ha! Ha! ha! He who funks and runs away, lives to funk another day."

The chant was heard and taken up. Presently all the fellows were singing the refrain gaily.

Fenley flushed to the eyes—his fists clenched and unclenched. For a moment he seemed about to speak, but at last he pushed a path through the mocking, jeering crowd, and strode away—the taunts still ringing in his ears.

But he was different somehow—the Remove recognized that. Lean as ever, but tanned and sinewy, with a new expression in his eyes, and compressed lips.

Later that evening, a boy whom Fenley recognized as one of Hinton's toadies, came to tell him that his class-master wished to see him in the gym.

Fenley knew it was not the class-master he had to expect, and he was not surprised to find Hinton, supported by three of his henchmen, waiting for him.

"So you've come," said the bully, locking the gym door, and putting the key in his pocket. "Well now, we'll see what you're made of. My friends are here to see that you don't get away. You're a slippery customer,



Then, before he knew any more, a straight left was landed on his nose.

you know—might go off any minute without warning—even as far as Coventry.” A roar of laughter greeted this sally, but was quickly suppressed; no one wanted

the fun spoiled by the untimely interruption of a too curious prefect.

Fenley said nothing. Instead, he took off his coat and commenced to roll up his sleeves.

“Good Lord! Look what he’s up to, you chaps,” sneered Hinton; “he’s taking off his coat to it. Better not do that, Fenley. You’ll need it later on. You can’t run away without your coat, you know. You might catch cold.”

There were half-stifled sniggers as Fenley calmly walked into the centre of the gym.

The fellows formed a ring round him and Hinton, waiting excitedly to see the fun.

“Right-o, Hinton, I’m ready!” said Fenley quietly. “Fire ahead!”

But, instead of putting up his fists, Hinton strolled insolently over, and standing just in front of Fenley, remarked with a grin—

“Oh, you’re ready now, my lad, are you? Well, I think it’s up to me to teach you not to keep me waiting for so long; so here’s your first lesson, you naughty little boy!”

And amid another gleeful snigger of mirth he solemnly boxed Fenley’s ears.

Then, before he knew any more, a straight left was landed on his nose, a right fist was slammed immediately afterwards, and with considerable force, in the close neighbourhood of his solar plexus.

BATTLING FENLEY

With a gasp Hinton staggered to the side of the ring, battling for his wind, while he wiped the "claret" from his nose.

"That's just a lesson to you to keep your guard up," remarked Fenley sagely; "now, come on!"

Hinton would willingly have backed out now, for though a fair boxer, he hated punishment, but the eyes of his henchmen were on him expectantly, and he began to swing his arms as he again approached Fenley, lithe as a young panther and nearly as fit.

At once the kid was upon him, landing blow after blow, all well planted and telling.

Thud! thud! thud! went the fists mechanically, and a gasp went up from the other boys as they watched.

Fenley's nose was bleeding too now, and one eye was partly closed, but Hinton was in a much worse mess.

Panting for breath, he had scarcely enough pluck left to keep up guard. He was obviously nearly finished.

"Come on, you blighters," he gasped out. "Come on, all of you. Can't you? What are you all thinking about?"

There was a moment's hesitation—and in that moment Fenley sprang forward, landing a straight left to the jaw.

Hinton staggered back, swayed, flopped down on to the floor dead out, and a second later his toadies closed in on Fenley, who backed against the wall fighting for

BATTLING FENLEY

all he was worth against the cowardly onslaught of Hinton's pals.

His fists moved mechanically, still dealing the sledge-hammer blows; but he was very nearly spent, there was a strange mist before his eyes, a singing in his ears, and everything seemed far away and rather like a queer dream.

Finding his resistance weakening, the others began to put fresh vigour into the attack. Suddenly the door of the gym was forced open, and with a yell of concentrated fury Jack Harper hurled himself into the fray.

He was followed a second later by Hughes and a large body of the Remove.

There was a short struggle, but Hinton's bullies were soon put out of action by weight and superior numbers, and Hinton recovered his senses to find himself surrounded by an angry crowd of his own classmates, while the battered remains of his particular cronies were being forcibly propelled through the gym door.

When he had sufficiently come to, Hinton was jerked none too gently to his feet by Jack Harper.

"It's a lucky thing for you you're as done in as you are, for I'm just itching to have a go at you myself," remarked Harper dangerously; "so before you begin to feel any better, I'd go while going's good!"

Hinton went, and Harper turned his attention to Fenley, who, though spent and exhausted, was beginning to pull together.

BATTLING FENLEY

"Feeling better, old chap?" he inquired.

"Oh, I'm all right, old man," smiled Fenley, holding out his hand. "Jolly decent of you to come to my rescue, though."

Harper took it and gripped it hard.

"How did it start?" he asked excitedly.

"Well, you see," Fenley told him, "Hinton got me in here and started being rude, so I had to teach him a lesson. He forgot I had been roughing it for two months on a Spanish tramp. And Jack, old man, that's the place to learn how to take care of yourself. I had all the funk knocked out of me there, believe me! But I didn't reckon on tackling the whole bunch at once—Phew!"

Gradually it dawned on the fellows of Remove that the despised "kid" had become a "man."

Suddenly he was a hero, and they gave tongue.

"Battling Fenley! Battling Fenley!"

"And he's earned the title!" cried Jack Harper, as he proudly linked arms with his pal. "By Jove, kid, you're great!"

"So long as you're pleased, so am I," answered Fenley. "It's jolly fine to be back again, old man."

THE GRIZZLY BEAR.

HERE is a grizzly bear story. In 1870 a small party of city folk were taking an excursion up one of the cañons in California, when the "piping of young turkeys was heard in a thicket"; and one of the trippers, who had come out armed with a shot-gun, declared that he would try to bring down a bird for supper. Accordingly off he went, and his friends waited for him. But he had hardly disappeared from their sight when he reappeared with a female grizzly and two cubs at his heels! To the horror of his friends, too, the big bear was seen to knock the youth senseless with a blow from her paw, and then to retire, growling, with a backward look which certainly implied that she meant to return ere long!

What were the rest of the party to do? Not one of them was armed; they were just a set of city folk on holiday, and they certainly had not expected to meet with such a terrible adventure. The bravest of them took counsel, however, and decided that they must venture down to find out if their friend still breathed. They were just about to set off on the perilous passage, when, suddenly, up jumped the bear's victim, and taking to his heels like a madman, raced up the hill towards them at the top of his speed! The blow from the bear's paw had fallen just below the waist-line of his trousers, and had knocked him senseless, certainly, besides tearing nearly every fragment of clothes from his



The big bear was seen to knock the youth senseless.

THE GRIZZLY BEAR

back ; but no bones had been broken, and there was not even a flesh wound to show as a proof of the dreadful experience through which he had passed ! It was one of the very narrowest escapes of which I have ever read.

And perhaps you will understand better what a narrow escape it really was when you know a little more about the North American grizzly bear, which roams about the Rocky Mountains, and is to be found in the countries round. It is the fiercest and the most dreadful of all bears, the largest, the strongest, and the most greatly feared. The polar bear will attack man if it is in need of a meal. The European bear is no enemy to man, and only retaliates if disturbed ; though on very rare occasions it has been known, when emerging in a famished condition from its long winter fast, to attack some human being who has chanced to cross its path. But the grizzly is a much more formidable beast, and it will often attack man quite unprovoked.

It can run fast, and it can swim well. In its youth it is a good climber, though this power decreases as the bear itself increases in years and weight. It eats much more flesh food than any other kind of bear ; and its strength is so great that by its great “hug” it can press out the life of an ox. It has been known to “drag to a considerable distance the carcass of a buffalo weighing about one thousand pounds.”

